

Baltimore & Ohio Railroad:
Mount Clare Shops
South side of Pratt Street between
Carey and Poppleton Streets
Baltimore
Independent City
Maryland

HAER No. MD-6A

HAER
MD,
4-BALT,
127A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

BALTIMORE & OHIO RAILROAD: MOUNT CLARE SHOPS

HAER No. MD-6A

HAER
MD,
4-BALT,
127A-

Location: South side of Pratt Street between Carey and Poppleton Streets
Baltimore, Independent City, Maryland

Date of erection: 1829 and later

Designer/Builder: Baltimore & Ohio Railroad

Original Use: Manufacturer of locomotives, freight and passenger cars, bridges, small hardware and building components for use throughout the system.

Present Use: Shops demolished in 1974, except for several buildings retained by B & O Transportation Museum.

Original Owner: Baltimore and Ohio Railroad

Present Owner: Baltimore & Ohio Railroad
P.O. Box 6419
Terminal Tower
Cleveland, Ohio 44101

Significance: Mount Clare Shops were the earliest railroad shops in the western hemisphere, if not the world. The B & O had a facility at this site since 1829. At its height, it was the most comprehensive, self-contained shop complex producing everything from steam locomotives, freight and passenger cars, bridges, small hardware and building components for use throughout the system. Operations included metal casting, forging and machinery, wood working and boiler making.

After years of diminishing operations as craftsmen retired, and work was either produced elsewhere on the system or purchased, the shops were demolished in 1974. The B & O Transportation Museum uses Mount Clare Station, the circular passenger car-shop, the print shop, the paint and repair shop and the electrical pipe and hardware shop for museum purposes.

Transmitted by: Jean Yearby, HAER, 1984,

The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad was chartered on February 1, 1827. The first stone was laid on July 4, 1828. On October 1, 1829, laying of the permanent track began and on January 7, 1830, the road opened its newly laid line from Mount Clare to the Carrollton Viaduct over Gwynns Falls, three miles away from passenger service. It was obvious that a shop would be needed for car repairs and a stable for horses. Until steam locomotives became standard in 1835, horses pulled railed cars along the route.

In 1835, James Carroll donated 10 acres to the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company for the construction of railroad shops. However, ten acres were found insufficient for "purposes connected with business of the road," due to the rapidly increasing operations of the company. Eleven acres were purchased the same year (1835), lying south of and binding on Pratt Street and adjoining Carroll's land on the east. The entire property now totaled 21 acres after the purchase. Construction began on an engine house with accommodations for nine engines, a large wooden car house, 150 feet in length containing three tracks, another car house, 208 feet long and of brick, and a smithyard repairing shop. In 1849, the large car shed was enlarged.

Since the railroad was expanding rapidly west of Cumberland, Maryland, the machine shops and foundry at Mount Clare became especially important in providing iron work and employed up to 1,700 men at this time. On October 21, 1850, additions were made to the grounds for the price of \$85,272.21, so that the total area covered 40 acres with a width of 266 feet, roughly forming a square. At the request of the Chief Engineer, William Parker, a shop was constructed 169 feet in length by 60 feet wide together with two additional buildings of a "less expensive character" for the manufacturing of castings and other work. A machine shop was destroyed by fire in July 1851, but was replaced later the same year. In 1853, additions were made to the second engine house, enabling it to receive a new longer class of locomotive. A fireproof sawing and planing mill was erected in 1860, and a circular saw added the following year. A spacious fireproof building facing Pratt Street was built in 1862 to replace the original dilapidated brick building. The new structure was 108 feet long, 50 feet wide, with a slate roof and brick floor. No windows were present on the sides or the ends of the building. Instead, a skylight provided light.

To provide ample buildings for expanding shop needs, the available space at Mount Clare was extended. In 1866, Schroeder's Run, which passes through the property, was arched over. A two-story machine shop was then built with a slate roof, 60 by 199 feet, and furnished with large steam hammers, spiking machines, and forges. In 1867, a blacksmith shop, 75 feet by 564 feet, and a wheelhouse were finished. Two years later, a passenger car and paint shop was constructed, composed of one wing, 227 feet long by 90 feet, 32 feet high, and two wings, 378 feet by 95 feet wide on Amity Alley, each two stories high, with a height of 13 feet and 12 feet respectively. In 1872, a major construction plan was underway, including a new boiler shop, 386 feet by 76 feet wide, and divided into three equal sections of two stories, 9 feet, 6 inches and 28 feet, 6 inches; a saw mill, 247 feet long, 70 feet wide and two stories high; a L-shaped brass foundry, 105 by 50 feet.

The bridge shop was finished during the summer of 1882 and was responsible for the work on the line between Baltimore and Philadelphia. In February 1884, the B & O Railroad Company completed the circular car shop at Mount Clare, which now houses the transportation museum. The exterior walls are built of hard brick and the roof of slate. The building, 235 feet in diameter, had room for 22 stalls. It was lit by a clearstory 100 feet in diameter. The roof slopes from the outside walls to the base of the clearstory and is carried on trussed rafters which are supported by 22 wrought iron columns. It is considered one of the finest structures of its kind in existence.

It was largely Mount Clare that gave the B & O its high degree of self-reliance in terms of its physical plant. The shops were most noted for the manufacture of complete locomotives, starting with Peter Cooper's legendary TOM THUMB in 1829--erected in the B & O horse stable--and ending in 1948 when the last engine was outshopped. In the 1920s, when Mount Clare was at its zenith, 18 locomotives, new and rebuilt, left the works weekly and the work force was 3,000.

During the past 20 years, the work handled there gradually dwindled, either contracted out or carried out in the railroad's other facilities. In 1974, the entire complex was decommissioned, the equipment sold, and the site demolished, save for several buildings retained for museum purposes. In 1953, the print shop, Mount Clare Station, and the passenger car shop were converted to the B & O Transportation Museum, a function they still serve.

For further information, see:

Sagle, Lawrence W. "America's Oldest Railroad Shops-Mt. Clare," Railroad History, No. 127, October 1972. Published by the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society.